

CHAPTER NO. 155

HOUSE BILL NO. 1029

By Representatives Rinks, McDaniel

Substituted for: Senate Bill No. 1064

By Senator Herron

AN ACT to name a segment of State Highway 114 in Decatur County in honor of the late Jesse Glynn Brasher.

WHEREAS, from time to time, the members of this General Assembly have seen fit to name certain highways in honor of those exemplary men and women whose lives will forever stand as a tribute to heroism; and

WHEREAS, no Tennessean is more deserving of such an honor than the late Jesse Glynn Brasher of Decatur County, who passed on from this life on October 19, 2002; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Brasher was an exemplary citizen and soldier, devoted husband and father, and peerless community leader; and

WHEREAS, a man comprised of impeccable moral fiber and an inviolable patriot, Mr. Brasher heeded the urgings of his soul when he entered into active service in the United States Army in October 1942; and

WHEREAS, inducted at Fort Benning, Georgia, Mr. Brasher received infantry training in intelligence and reconnaissance before shipping out to New Guinea; and

WHEREAS, while stationed in New Guinea, young Jesse Brasher learned of President Roosevelt's call for volunteers for "a dangerous and hazardous mission." Seeking only to serve his leader, his country, and his God, Mr. Brasher stepped forward and became one of the three thousand men of the 5307th Composite Unit Provisional, a group known worldwide as "Merrill's Marauders"; and

WHEREAS, serving in the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon of the Blue Combat Team inside the Second Battalion of the 5307th, Mr. Brasher was one of fifty-four men in the unit to carry the Browning automatic rifle when the men set out from India on the Ledo Road on what would become a one-thousand-mile-long trek through the Himalayan mountain range into Burma; and

WHEREAS, Merrill's Marauders engaged in five major battles and thirty minor engagements in their victorious mission to destroy the Japanese army's supply line, and Mr. Brasher bravely fought in each and every one. At no time during the battles at Walawbum, Shaduzup, Inkangahtawng, Nhpumga, and Myitkyina did Mr. Brasher's valor wane, nor his bravery flag; and

WHEREAS, five months of marching and fighting in the jungles of Burma tempered Mr. Brasher, strengthening his character through hardship. As one of Merrill's Marauders, he learned that a man never leaves a task unfinished and never leaves another man behind; and

WHEREAS, of the three thousand men marching out of India under the leadership of Brigadier General Frank Merrill, Mr. Brasher was one of the few men who

lived to witness the end of the campaign before he was evacuated to a hospital in June 1945 with a fever of unknown origin and suffering a spinal injury; and

WHEREAS, of the three thousand brave men who volunteered to become Merrill's Marauders, only six hundred six survived to see their blessed homeland again, the ravages of battle and disease claiming eighty percent of the unit throughout the duration of the campaign; and

WHEREAS, for its courage under fire and unwavering determination in the jungles of Burma, the entire 5307th was awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation, redesignated in 1966 as the Presidential Unit Citation and awarded by the President in the name of Congress, and each of Merrill's Marauders was awarded the Bronze Star, a very rare distinction for an entire unit. Mr. Brasher's bravery and iron will also earned him the Combat Infantryman's Badge as a Browning Automatic Rifleman (BAR), the World War II Victory Medal, the American Service Medal, and the Asiatic Pacific Service Medal; and

WHEREAS, upon his release from the hospital, Mr. Brasher trained Canadian troops in the use of American armaments before refusing a promotion and being honorably discharged from the United States Army; and

WHEREAS, in April 1946, Jesse Brasher married Dorothy Davis, whose picture he carried with him into Asia, and whose picture he continued to carry until his passing. A dedicated family man, Mr. Brasher demonstrated great love for and pride in his daughter, Bonita, and his grandchildren, Jared Smith and Sarah Brockman; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Brasher's daughter, Bonita Brockman, regarded him as a hero and a friend, learning many important lessons on life through his guiding words; and

WHEREAS, a man of great faith, Mr. Brasher was a devoted member of Scotts Hill Church of Christ; and

WHEREAS, his lingering spinal injury hindering his entry into the workforce, Mr. Brasher drove a school bus for the Decatur County school system for thirty years, travelling over one million miles without incident, and maintained the fifth-generation farm given to his great-great-great grandfather by William Blount, the first Governor of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, a man dedicated to his community, Mr. Brasher served on the Scotts Hill School Parent-Teacher Association, was a respected Mason, and served as Acting President of the American Legion; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Brasher was a generous man who loved to share the bounty of his blessings with his many friends, relatives, and neighbors; he was also an avid carpenter and architect, using his skills with wood to bring joy and comfort to all those around him; and

WHEREAS, in appreciation to his legacy of service to his country, the Decatur County Commission has memorialized this body to name a portion of State Highway 114 to permanently commemorate Jesse Glynn Brasher's bountiful life of valor and commitment to the ideals of freedom for which this great land was founded; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly most heartily concurs with this excellent proposal; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, the segment of State Highway 114 from the Decatur County and Henderson County boundary eastward to its intersection with State Highway 69 in Decatur County is hereby designated as the "Jesse Glynn Brasher Memorial Highway".

SECTION 2. The department of transportation is directed to erect suitable signs or to affix suitable markers designating such segment of State Highway 114 as the "Jesse Glynn Brasher Memorial Highway".

SECTION 3. The erection of such directional signs shall be within the guidelines prescribed by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

SECTION 4. This act shall become operative only if the federal highway administrator advises the commissioner of transportation in writing that the provisions of this act shall not render Tennessee in violation of federal laws and regulations and subject to penalties prescribed therein.

SECTION 5.

(1) This act shall become operative only if Decatur County, Tennessee, either remits the estimated cost of the erection of such signs to the department of transportation within one (1) year of the effective date of this act or manufactures such signs in accordance with the provisions of subdivision (2). Decatur County shall make such payment prior to any expenditure by the state for the manufacture or installation of such signs. The department shall return any unused portion of the estimated cost to Decatur County within thirty (30) days of the erection of such signs. If the actual cost exceeds the estimated cost, Decatur County shall remit an amount equal to the difference in such costs to the department within thirty (30) days of receiving an itemized invoice of the actual cost from the department.

(2) Decatur County may manufacture and erect such signs provided that such signs are manufactured and erected pursuant to state and federal guidelines and approved by the department.

SECTION 6. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.

PASSED: April 30, 2003



JIMMY NAIFEH, SPEAKER
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



JOHN S. WILDER
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE

APPROVED this 19th day of May 2003



PHIL BREDESEN, GOVERNOR